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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PBTS](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: Urechean's Implausible Presidential Ambitions

Classified by Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry under 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a December 17 meeting with Ambassador Chaudhry, Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) party leader Serafim Urechean criticized his political enemies, lamented Moldova's decline under Voronin's rule, predicted his own election as president in the 2009 elections (despite ruling- party dirty tricks), and described his vague plans for a solution of the Transnistrian conflict. Urechean estimated his chances of success at a higher rate than that shown by current opinion polls. End summary.

Urechean on Enemies and Betrayers

¶2. (C) Speaking with heavy irony, he referred to President Voronin as "Comrade" (and then explained the Soviet reference), and described the many court cases brought against him as examples of "Moldovan know-how." He stated that he had the "worst impression" of Christian Democrat leader Iurie Rosca, but declined to elaborate. His strongest criticisms were made against former Democrat Party and Social Democratic Party colleagues, who, he claimed, reneged on commitments to form alliances with the AMN after the June 2007 local elections. If the other parties had kept their promises, he said, the Party of Communists (PCRM) would now control only four out of 32 raions (districts), instead of the 11 they currently run.

Dark Days in Moldova

¶3. (C) Urechean painted a dark picture of conditions in Moldova, claiming that the PCRM was committing genocide, agriculture was destroyed, exports non-existent, deficits doubled, and 60 percent of all deaths occurred at home because people had no access to health care. He noted that pensioners, who form much of the PCRM's base of support, do not receive their pensions. However, average payments (USD 37 per month) are much less than the minimum needed to survive (USD 110 per month). In addition, he stated, pensions were funded as loans from the National Bank of Moldova, and constituted a debt of 2.5 billion lei (USD 250 million).

GOM Pressure on the AMN

¶4. (C) Urechean described GOM pressures on himself and on his party. The GOM, he noted, persisted in

prosecuting him on numerous corruption charges (from his 12 years as Chisinau Mayor from 1993 to 2005), despite his being cleared in the courts. He claimed that security forces monitored his travels, and that, after AMN members spoke in schools in three raions, GOM officials threatened the principals of these schools with dismissal if they allowed the AMN to speak again on school premises.

Urechean Predicts He Will Be Coalition President

15. (C) Despite these pressures, Urechean was confident that he would be elected President by a coalition of the three non-Communist parties: his own AMN, Vlad Filat's Liberal Democrats (PLDM), and Mihail Ghimpu and Dorin Chirtoaca's Liberals (PL). Urechean claimed that the PCRM would win 20-25 seats in the 101-member unicameral Parliament, and the AMN would win 34. (He made no predictions regarding seats to be won by the PLDM, PL, and independents.)

Comment: Reasons to Doubt the Prediction

16. (C) Urechean based his prediction on past numbers, his experience and exposure as Chisinau Mayor, his regional vote bases, and his own self-confidence. Urechean's claim that the AMN would win 34 seats in Parliament is unlikely: that was

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the number of seats won in 2005 by a larger alliance of which the AMN was a part. Urechean also cited the 14 raions run by AMN raion chairmen after the 2007 election, but failed to put the voting numbers into perspective: the PCRM won 33.5 percent of the votes cast for councilors, trailed by the AMN with 17.5 percent. (It was deal-making among several non-PCRM parties that overcame the PCRM plurality.) Present polling numbers are even less hopeful for the AMN, with Gallup and Monitorul Social putting the PCRM at 30 and 30.6 percent, respectively, and the AMN at 6.0 and 5.6 percent. Against such figures, Urechean's other claims for support (his two wins as Chisinau Mayor and his public declarations that he is ready) ring even more hollow.

17. (C) Urechean was vague about his platform, beyond stating a desire to improve Moldova's image and solve Transnistria by expelling Russian troops and perhaps reconfiguring Moldova as a federation of seven regions.

18. (C) Urechean's tendency to exaggerate his hopes and avoid uncomfortable numbers was on full display. Urechean's AMN party headquarters also revealed the operation of a less-than-modern political party. In the long dark hallway that formed the entrance, ten or so black-clad guards scowled at visitors. Urechean's office, up several flights of poorly lit stairs, displayed dozens of Orthodox icons on the wall. Outside the door, groups of petitioners waited humbly. The Ambassador's exhortation to Urechean to observe democratic values and the principles of freedom were apposite in what looked more like the lair of a Balkan warlord than the headquarters of a modern democratic party.

Chaudhry